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TO AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 006788

FOLLOWING REPEAT STATE 006788 ACTION BONN INFO USUN AMMAN
CAIRO DAMASCUS TEL AVIV 12 JAN

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 006788

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GN

SUBJECT: FRG AMBASSADOR VON STADEN'S CALL ON ASSISTANT
SECRETARY ATHERTON, JANUARY 7, 1976

1. GERMAN AMBASSADOR VON STADEN CALLED AT HIS REQUEST ON
NEA ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON ON JANUARY 7 FOR TOUR
D'HORIZON ON MIDDLE EAST. VON STADEN HIMSELF MADE LITTLE
COMMENT, OTHER THAN TO OBSERVE THAT THE SITUATION IS VERY
DISCOURAGING, AND THAT FRG GOVERNMENT IS CONCERNED OVER
BLEAK PROSPECTS FOR CONTINUED PROGRESS TOWARD SETTLEMENT.
FOLLOWING SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS MADE BY ATHERTON IN
RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS POSED BY VON STADEN IS PROVIDED FOR
ADDRESSEE POSTS' INFORMATION.

2. ATHERTON'S DECEMBER TRIP TO MIDDLE EAST -- ATHERTON
SAID THAT PURPOSE OF TRIP WAS TO TALK WITH REGIONAL LEADERS
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ABOUT FORTHCOMING SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING ON ARAB-ISRAELI

CONFLICT, AND TO MAKE SURE THERE WAS NO MISUNDERSTANDING IN MIDDLE EAST, AND ESPECIALLY IN ARAB CAPITALS, ABOUT WHAT USG CONSIDERS DESIRED APPROACH, AND WHAT IS CONSIDERED HARMFUL. IN COURSE OF VISIT HE EXPLAINED THERE ARE LIMITS TO WHAT CAN REALISTICALLY BE ACHIEVED IN UPCOMING DEBATE, AND THAT MANY RISKS WERE INVOLVED. BASICALLY POSITION PRESENTED WAS THAT DEBATE AND ANY RESULTING RESOLUTION SHOULD NOT UNDERMINE ESTABLISHED GENEVA NEGOTIATING PROCESS AND THE AGREED FRAMEWORK FOR NEGOTIATIONS IN SC RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338, AND THAT USG WOULD OPPOSE ANY OUTCOME WHICH WOULD CHANGE EXISTING NEGOTIATING FRAMEWORK. U.S. WOULD HOPE TO SEE OUTCOME WHICH WOULD PRESERVE THIS FRAMEWORK AND GIVE IMPETUS TO NEGOTIATIONS RATHER THAN FREEZE THEM.

3. REACTION TO ABOVE WAS NOT ENCOURAGING ATHERTON SAID. SYRIA, PRIME MOVER BEHIND DEBATE, SEEKS TO BRING PALESTINIANS IN AS EQUAL PARTNER IN NEGOTIATIONS AND TO SHORE UP SYRIA'S IMAGE AS LEADER OF ARAB WORLD DEPICTING EGYPT AS HAVING SOLD OUT ARAB CAUSE. WE AGREE THAT PALESTINIAN INTERESTS MUST BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT, BUT HOLD THIS SHOULD BE DONE IN NEGOTIATIONS THEMSELVES. FOR SC TO DECIDE TO BRING PLO INTO NEGOTIATION PROCESS WOULD PREJUDGE NEGOTIATIONS, WHICH IS UNACCEPTABLE. U.S. IS ALSO OPPOSED TO ANY ACTION WHICH WOULD SERVE TO DISCREDIT EGYPT BECAUSE OF ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN ACCORD ON SINAI.

4. ATHERTON SAID HE DID NOT BELIEVE SYRIA WAS READY TO GO TO WAR, BUT NEITHER WAS SYRIA WILLING TO ENTER INTO NEGOTIATIONS WITH ISRAEL WITHOUT SIMULTANEOUS TALKS BETWEEN PALESTINIANS AND ISRAELIS. ALL ARAB COUNTRIES COULD BE EXPECTED TO TAKE SIMILAR STANDS FOLLOWING SYRIAN LEAD.

5. PREPARATORY CONFERENCE -- ATHERTON DID NOT DETECT ANY ARAB INTEREST AT THIS TIME IN ALTERNATIVE OF PREPARATORY CONFERENCE TO GENEVA WHICH WE VIEW AS OFFERING ADVANTAGE ORIGINAL GENEVA PARTICIPANTS COULD TAKE PART WITHOUT PREJUDICING THEIR FINAL POSITION IN GENEVA. ARAB COUNTRIES NOW APPEAR TO BE FOCUSING FULL ATTENTION ON UPCOMING SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATE, AND TO OBTAINING OBJECTIVE OF HAVING PRINCIPLE OF PALESTINE'S RIGHT TO EXIST AS SEPARATE

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NATIONAL ENTITY INCLUDED AS BASIS FOR FINAL SETTLEMENT. WHILE NO JUDGMENT CAN BE MADE AS TO MINIMUM ARAB POSITION, NO FLEXIBILITY WAS DETECTED ON PALESTINE ISSUE.

6. PLO INTEREST IN NEGOTIATIONS -- DIFFERENCES WITHIN PLO ON THIS POINT HAVE BEEN REPORTED PREVIOUSLY, BUT THERE WAS NO INDICATION ANY PLO LEADER IS WILLING TO RISK PUBLICLY ACCEPTING ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST. MAJOR PROBLEM IS THAT

PLO DOES NOT ACCEPT RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338 AS HAVE JORDAN AND EGYPT, AND THIS IS ESSENTIAL TO ANY PROGRESS TOWARD PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI TALKS. VON STADEN NOTED THAT SYRIA HAD ACCEPTED RESOLUTION 338. ATHERTON CONCURRED, NOTING HOWEVER THAT SYRIA WISHES TO AMPLIFY IT TO INCLUDE PALESTINIANS AND PLO, WHICH COMPLETELY CHANGES RESOLUTION.

7. SINAI AGREEMENT -- IN REPLY TO AMBASSADOR'S QUESTION, ATHERTON OBSERVED THAT SYRIA STILL IS CRITICAL OF INTERIM ACCORD, MAINTAINING THAT IT HAS RESULTED IN TAKING EGYPT OUT OF THE CONFLICT, THUS WEAKENING ARAB BARGAINING POSITION.

8. EGYPT -- SADAT APPEARS TO BE VERY MUCH IN CHARGE, AND EXTREMES OF SYRIAN CRITICISM MAY HAVE SERVED TO CONSOLIDATE HIS POSITION WITHIN EGYPT. SAUDI SUPPORT FOR SADAT AND INTERIM AGREEMENT ALSO CONTRIBUTES TO SADAT'S STRENGTH.

9. JORDAN -- KING HUSSEIN CONTINUES TO BE CRITICAL OF INTERIM AGREEMENT HOLDING THAT EGYPT MADE EXCESSIVE CONCESSIONS. NOTWITHSTANDING RESULTS RABAT SUMMIT GIVING PLO RIGHT TO SPEAK FOR PALESTINIANS, JORDAN STILL VIEWS ITSELF AS CONFRONTATION STATE BECAUSE OF LONG COMMON BORDER WITH ISRAEL SOUTH OF WEST BANK JORDAN RIVER.

10. ISRAEL -- ISRAEL DOES NOT PLAN TO PARTICIPATE IN SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATE WITH PLO. ONLY ACCEPTABLE OUTCOME FROM ISRAELI POINT OF VIEW IS RECONFIRMATION RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338 WITHOUT ANY BASIC CHANGE IN GENEVA FORMULA FOR NEGOTIATIONS. THERE IS SERIOUS RISK DEBATE, IF RESULTING RESOLUTION GOES BEYOND RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338, COULD DRIVE ISRAEL OUT OF NEGOTIATING PROCESS ALTOGETHER. U.S. HAS CALLED AMBASSADORS BACK FOR CONSULTATION AND IS ALSO CONFIDENTIAL

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CURRENTLY REVIEWING ALTERNATIVES WITH ALLON DURING LATTER'S U.S. VISIT. NO CONCLUSIONS HAVE BEEN REACHED, BUT DIFFICULT TO ENVISAGE RESOLUTION EMERGING WHICH, IF ALLOWED TO PASS, WOULD NOT UPSET GENEVA FORMULA AND EXISTING FRAMEWORK FOR NEGOTIATIONS.

11. LEBANON -- ATHERTON DISCUSSED LEBANESE CRISIS DURING TRIP, AND ALL CAPITALS WERE WORRIED ALTHOUGH NONE HAD ANSWERS. SYRIA IS ESPECIALLY CONCERNED AND HAS ENCOURAGED OPPOSING FACTIONS TO REACH POLITICAL COMPROMISE AVOIDING PARTITION. AT SAME TIME SYRIA'S POSITION IS AMBIVALENT BECAUSE IT HAS BEEN MAJOR SUPPLIER OF ARMS AND FUNDS TO MUSLIM FACTION IN LEBANON. SYRIA HAS NEITHER BEEN COMPLETELY HELPFUL NOR COMPLETELY UNHELPFUL. MAIN INTEREST SEEMS TO BE KEEPING FOOT IN DOOR, AND NOT ALLOWING SITUA-

TION TO TAKE TURN WHICH WOULD HARM SYRIAN INTERESTS. IN
END, CRISIS MUST BE SOLVED BY LEBANESE THEMSELVES, AND U.S.
CAN DO LITTLE TO CONTRIBUTE.

12. SOVIETS -- CONTRARY TO ISRAELI CLAIMS, SYRIA AND THE
USSR HAVE NOT BEEN IN COMPLETE ACCORD ON MIDDLE EAST
ISSUE. SYRIA WANTED TO HAVE LOCUS OF NEGOTIATIONS

TRANSFERRED FROM GENEVA TO SECURITY COUNCIL, BUT USSR
OPPOSED WISHING TO MAINTAIN GENEVA MACHINERY. POSSIBLY
FOR THIS REASON SYRIA IS NO LONGER OPENLY PUSHING IDEA.

13. ISRAELI SUSPENSION FROM UN -- RESPONDING TO AMBASSA-
DOR'S QUESTION, ATHERTON OBSERVED THAT ARAB COUNTRIES
NOT DRIVING TO SUSPEND ISRAEL FROM UN AT THIS POINT, BUT
THIS MAY WELL BE THEIR OBJECTIVE EVENTUALLY. KISSINH
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